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THE SUCCESSFUL STORAGE OF CABBAGE

AND OTHER VEGETABLES

By Chas. J. Cook



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STORING THE VEGETABLE CROP briefly stated means just this—be your own business man—be your own speculator, with the odds all on your side. On all classes of vegetables, in five years out of six, (with the possible exception of potatoes) values double and often treble from the time these commodities leave the grower in the fall until the time they reach the ultimate consumer a few months later. And, especially is this true of Cabbage, because it is the most difficult product in the vegetable world to store successfully, and this is apparently the reason the average farmer consigns most of his crop to the kraut barrel, and the commercial grower is usually glad to “cut loose” as soon as the big wholesale buyers (speculators) from the city make an appearance. These fellows make a practice of buying from the grower in carload lots and accumulating their purchases at some central distributing point, or wherever they may have adequate storage facilities. Generally market prices are depressed at the harvest season as a natural result of the common practice of the majority of growers to sell direct from the field oftentimes “swamping” the market. With a better understanding of the merits of storage and the installation of storage facilities on the premises of the truck farmer conditions could gradually be overcome which are almost intolerable. For instance, the average price paid in the fall varies from \$5.00 to \$20.00 per ton; however, deals from the latter figure up as high as \$40.00 per ton were made quite frequently during the late fall of 1916, this being an exceptionally short-crop cabbage season. By a comparison of these figures with the price paid by the consumer during the winter and spring months, ranging from 3c to 6c per pound, and as high as 17½c per pound at Yankton and elsewhere in the spring of 1917, there is no doubt but what everyone will readily come to the conclusion that there are enormous profits to be derived through equipping ourselves with ample storage rooms for our own products, and that a thorough investigation of scientific storage will be greatly rewarded.

CABBAGE is the most difficult of all vegetables to keep for any length of time inasmuch as it is composed about 75% of moisture. If it is placed in a warm room, naturally, evaporation will soon reduce the head to a pulp. If piled in a heap, as we would store potatoes, the large amount of moisture will cause it to heat and decay just as a bin of wet grain would do. The method which I have found to be most satisfactory and which I am now using is this: I have a special apartment allotted for cabbage and cabbage only; in this apartment I have built frames made of ordinary heavy posts and 2x8's as joists. The joists are spaced two feet apart vertically. On these joists I lay a loose floor (or semi-floor) using 2x4's and spacing them about four inches apart. The floor is put in place as I lay away the cabbage. The idea in spacing the floor is to allow the air to circulate all around and between the cabbage. Otherwise, it will heat and decay. This gives me a shelf, or rather a frame-work of shelves, two feet

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apart, and as it is impossible to lay the heads intact it will readily be observed that there will be an air space above each tier of cabbage. This space permits circulation of air all around the cabbage. I maintain a temperature of about 36 degrees above Fahrenheit, and never allow it to go over 40 degrees or below 30 degrees. An even temperature is essential as it affords less evaporation. Slightly freezing will improve the quality, though if it is allowed to freeze and thaw at different intervals, this will have a tendency toward impairing its long keeping qualities. I always remove the roots and practically all surplus leaves when placing on shelves, leaving just enough leaves as to allow a final trimming when the heads are being packed for market, as this gives a bright, clean, fresh appearance. It is best to remove the crop from the field into storage in the afternoon, or at a time when they are dry—too much moisture is the cause of decay, and especially is this true if storage room is kept warm. I never harvest my crop until the latter part of October and often as late as the first week of November, whenever it is cool enough so that temperature can be lowered sufficiently in storage room. A large ventilator in the form of a sky-light is installed in the center of each storage apartment. Good and efficient ventilation is essential.

WHEN IMPOSSIBLE TO MAINTAIN A LOW TEMPERATURE the placing of each head separately in a wrapping, or several wrappings of paper, (oiled paper is preferable) will aid materially in protecting the keeping qualities, inasmuch as this will have a tendency toward preventing direct exposure to radical changes in atmosphere, thereby preserving the natural juices. The adherence of roots and leaves and hanging up by roots is a very common practice. With this method the usual coveted point is the preservation of moisture, and I doubt whether it is as practical and desirable as wrapping in paper. On account of increased bulk much more storage room is required.

THE AVERAGE FARMER OR SMALL GARDENER who is not equipped with proper storage cellar will undoubtedly be interested in a good out-door method of wintering cabbage; take an ordinary plow or lister with which provide a deep furrow—in this furrow line up the cabbage roots up, cover over with dirt and then a heavy layer of straw or litter to prevent alternate freezing and thawing before you are ready to unearth in the spring. The soil should be allowed to draw out the frost gradually, or they can be removed when in a frozen condition and allowed to thaw out slowly in a cool room not warmer than 40 degrees above Fahrenheit. They will come out fresh, crisp and in excellent condition. Considerable success is attained by digging larger trenches and piling the cabbage in pyramids, but they are more liable to heat and decay if kept in this manner.



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ONIONS must be kept in a cool, dry room or any other source of moisture. Temperature should be maintained at 40 to 45 degrees above Fahrenheit. They should be placed on shelves or arranged in such a way so that they can be stirred up occasionally. I have had fairly good success storing in bushel crates and stirring them around by removing from one crate into another at different times throughout the winter. This loosens them in the crates and permits circulation of air more readily. Onions should always be well cured and thoroughly dry when placed in storage.

CARROTS, PARSNIPS, ETC. should be placed in bins practically the same as potatoes. Temperature should be held at about 40 degrees above Fahrenheit. A light covering of sand or dirt will prevent withering and enhance long keeping qualities.

My farm is located $2\frac{1}{2}$ miles West of the City of Yankton. Soil is composed largely of heavy black Missouri bottommuck, ideal cabbage growing soil, but a trifle too heavy for growing other vegetables with success. Consequently, I am specializing on cabbage. I have constructed a solid concrete cellar measuring 20x44 feet. My entire crop is placed in storage and I find little trouble in making sales at very satisfactory prices. I have a steadily growing list of shipping customers in adjacent territory, besides supplying all of our home trade regularly until new cabbage appears on the market. In fact, I have a sale recorded made on May 15th to the South Dakota State Hospital for One Ton of Cabbage.

NOW, that a universal food shortage threatens our country, I trust that these few lines will help many in keeping down the high cost of living, and that we will all do away with the usual practice of transferring our surplus vegetables to "old bossy" at the harvest season, just because they are cheap and plentiful. Let us **SAVE** and **ECONOMIZE** and thereby "Do your bit" toward feeding the world.

Yours respectfully,

CHAS. J. COOK

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